

James Miller House
South Park, Allegheny County, Pa.

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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA
District No. 4 of Pennsylvania

REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

Historic American Buildings Survey
Lawrence Wolfe, District Officer (Up to April 16, 1936)
Lamont H. Button, District Officer
119 E. Montgomery Avenue, Pittsburgh, Pa.

JAMES MILLER HOUSE
South Park, Allegheny County, Pa.

Owner: Allegheny County, c/o The Commissioners of Allegheny County,
County Office Building, Pittsburgh, Pa.

Date of Erection: 1804-1808.

Architect: Unknown, if any.

Builder: Unknown, but probably the owner.

Present Condition: This building has been restored by the County Commissioners within the past few years, and in general has been sympathetically done which insures to it a long future life.

Number of Stories: The original element is one story high and the additions each two stories, but second floors at different levels.

Materials of Construction: The foundations and all walls including the heavy interior walls were constructed of local sandstone. The quoins were large stones which were dressed square and the surface was tooled with a point. The indications point to the removal of the quoins where the parlor addition was attached, and their subsequent disposal at the corners of the addition. The field or body of the wall was built up from much smaller sized stones all laid in random beds. The parlor addition is 20 feet wide across the chimney end, and was attached to the sitting room element which was 20 feet and 5 inches wide, which makes the rear wall out of line. Where the parlor addition was attached to the sitting room element, there is a vertical stone joint. This is hard to explain, if we accept the explanation of the transfer of quoins from this point to the corners of the parlor wing. The floors were of wide boards, 6 to 10 inches, mostly of oak, tongued and grooved, and nailed to hewn oak joists. Interior partitions were built of the same kind and size of boards. The ceiling boards on the second floor of the parlor addition are very wide, several being about 20 inches. The present roof was put on recently by the County Commissioners, and is meant to be a restoration of the original roof. It is of hand-split shingles. The original roof probably was also hand-split shingle or shakes of oak.

Other Existing Records: The County Commissioners have compiled some written record, possibly from church records since this building was used at one time for church services, and for that reason is called "The Manse". The church record gives as the date of the first church service 1776 which was possibly held in a building, likely a log cabin, on this site.

Additional Data: This building was preserved by the County Commissioners because of its location in an area which they had purchased for a County Park, and also for its historical associations. Oliver Miller, the father of James, made his will in 1782 and was killed in the Whiskey Insurrection of 1794. His son is generally agreed upon as having been the first white child born in Snowden Township in 1763. He was the eighth child. Oliver Miller was supposed to have come to this district one year before. James Miller began the building in 1804 or 1808, the two dates which have been ascribed to it. The patent to the farm was granted on a survey made by James Miller in 1785. There is no doubt that some home, likely a log cabin, preceded the stone house, but there is no record of it. This house seems to have been built in three parts at three different times. The low one story kitchen element seems to have been the first building. There is evidence that the original roof was about a foot lower than the present one as there is a sloped joint in the stone work on the gable end. One end of this kitchen element was incorporated in the next building which encompassed the sitting room. This addition is several steps higher than the kitchen, and on the south elevation contains two windows, one on each floor which are five lights high. There are no other windows in the whole house like them, yet they seem to be contemporary with the other windows. They are slightly greater in dimension than the other windows in this unit, but the difference is hardly discernable from the inside, because the chair rail which lines with the stool and apron has been slightly warped to tie them in with the other windows. The inference is that these windows were salvaged from some other building, and were deliberately used in conjunction with the four light high ones.

The foregoing information under the caption "Additional Data" has been compiled by the Western Pennsylvania Architectural Survey, a project of the Buhl Foundation under the direction of Mr. Charles M. Stotz, A.I.A., Bessemer Building, Pittsburgh, Pa.

Lamont H. Button

Lamont H. Button, A.I.A., District Officer-W.P.A.

Pennsylvania District No. 4

May 12, 1936

Reviewed T.H.W.